

Attempt at a Symphony

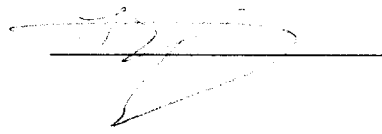
An Honors Thesis (HONRS 499)

by

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A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'T. Koontz', is written over a horizontal line.

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Purpose of Thesis:

As an English major, I have had the great fortune to take a number of creative writing courses. I have been exposed to criticism and encouragement from both professors and students. This collection of poetry consists of several works I have written, revised, and fine tuned during my college career. I have attempted to assemble a chapbook representative of my best pieces which have been a result of my Honors education at Ball State.

Ready
Whenever
You Are.

Discover romance

wish upon a star

Start writing your novel.

Make it happen

Create a Little Magic

BRIGHT THINGS LIE AHEAD
LEAD A MORE COLORFUL LIFE



YOUR MOTHER TAUGHT
YOU NEVER TO COMPROMISE
YOUR STANDARDS.

Make Room
for Love—and

It Will Come

Make life more playful

Some of the wildest storms happen below deck

LOVE

Some people measure their
lives in pulse rates and sit-ups.
Far better to measure yours
in licks of ice cream, well-
told jokes, mad dashes to be
first in the water, belly
laughs. And, when you die, it
won't be an erratic shift
in your heart rate, it will be an
overdose of mirth, fun
poisoning, death by laughter.

feeling beautiful feels good

OPEN YOUR MIND'S EYE

Do something delicious



IT DRAWS FIRE TO THE MOON

-DANIEL

INDULGE.

A passion for simplicity

NEVER SETTLE FOR LESS

Life is not work

SET your SPIRIT FREE.

Laughter can add more years to your life than sleep class.

LIFE IS HOW YOU CHANGE IT™

WHY NOT SHOW OFF?

360°

LOST YOUR SENSES.

REALITY IS THE BEST FANTASY OF ALL.

Attempt
at a
Symphony

BY
JENNIFER JUSTICE

FOREWORD

During my four years at Ball State University as an English major and Humanities minor, the number and variety of authors I have been exposed to is quite great. I have had to read works dated centuries before the birth of Christ to the present, and I have been so impressed with the ability of literature to stay alive that I have decided to fine tune my efforts as a writer and a poet.

"Language is a powerful element in human life, and the manipulation of language to create literature can be extremely influential." This is a quote from a paper I wrote in response to the poetry of Mark Strand, and it is a statement I believe in very strongly. After all, the basic intent of a writer is to influence, to some degree, those who read his works. This is one reason why I write. At this juncture, I am mostly concerned with solidifying my own thoughts, as a writer, pertaining to the roles of writers and readers of literature in general and poetry in particular.

It is my belief, first of all, that a writer's primary concern for his writing should be himself; the reader is secondary. Writing can be a highly personal form of self-expression, and it can therefore be used as a type of therapy for the author. I use writing quite often to vent frustration, anger, and other extreme emotions for which I cannot find it possible to voice my feelings. These pieces, usually essays, poems, or journal-type entries, are highly personal and rarely shared with others. Writing helps me to get my feelings out and keep me sane. Writing divulges who I am and who I am becoming; it tells where I have been and where I am going. It is for these reasons that I continue to write, and it is these feelings that validate the assembly of this chapbook.

In my studies at the university, I have come to an understanding of the responsibilities and goals of writers. The first responsibility of a writer is to consider himself and his own emotional needs for writing. Secondly, he must be selective with the works he presents publicly by keeping his audience in mind. An author has every right to be purposefully obscure, but it becomes problematic when vague metaphors and symbols

distract from their own effect. Literary devices should be used to one's advantage to emphasize meaning, not detract from it.

There are at least three key goals of a writer. First, a writer wants to be unique and creative. There has to be some distinguishing characteristic about the author to get him noticed. Next, an author wants to influence his readers. The author may want to motivate people to help themselves, overcome anxieties, relax and be entertained, or simply think. The ultimate goal of a writer, however, is to be read.

The role of the reader is rather significant; first and foremost, the readers *read*. By doing so, the readers perform an even more important task; readers keep the works they read alive. Without readership, literature cannot exist. Literature demands readership to survive. It is due to the readers of this world that we can continue to read Homer, Virgil, and Plato; we are familiar with Shakespeare, Browning, and Hawthorne. The works of these authors have continued to exist for hundreds of years for two simple reasons: they contain redeemable literary qualities, and because they do, people continue to read them. They are alive.

It is not necessary to know a lot about me to extract meaning from the poems I have selected for this chapbook. I have assembled a variety of poems that differ in style, verse form, and subject matter. Some have been created to provoke thought, or to relate feelings like love and fear that we all possess, or to merely get a laugh. Through my experiences as a reader, I have come to the conclusion that everyone should be allowed to experience a work in his own, original way. Like Thoreau, I want everyone to have "an original relation" to the world; in this case, the world of literature. It has been my purpose to put together a chapbook representative of all I have detailed in this foreword. Literature represents to me society's ticket to other worlds, to use the imagination, and to the presentation of new realities. The words I have put forth on these pages have become my attempt at a symphony.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This chapbook has been created from several works-in-progress that have been transformed into final projects due greatly to my teachers at Ball State University. First thanks go out to Thomas Koontz whose insight and love for rhythm and words have made me strive toward perfection. I would also like to thank Mark Hamilton and the students from my poetry workshop classes who have offered their thoughtful criticisms and have continually challenged me to write more. I thank Forrest Houlette for forcing me to come to terms with what type of critic I am which, in turn, has made me realize what place writing has in my life. In short, I greatly appreciate everyone at the university who has made me read, write, and be aware of language and its affects on humanity.

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POETRY

A glance, a grin, a wink,
a touch, a whisper.
A step, a stare, a dance,
a laugh, a caress.
A kiss, a kiss, another.
A mood, a feel, a button, a zipper.
A grope, a gasp, a moan.
A shriek, a shrill, a cry.
Exhilaration.

Climax.

Exhaustion.

MY CHILD

The sun, the birds, the new spring grass,
and the budding trees...

I took a walk inside myself
to find the child who lives there.
I found her sleeping beneath collections
of memories, ideas, and poems-yet-to-be,
tucked away,
almost out of sight.
Gently I woke her and asked her to play--
to play with me in the vibrance of the Spring.
Her favorite time of year--
and mine.

I want to swing up to the stars
and kiss that old man in the moon.
I want to roll down a hill from top to bottom
then gaze at the clouds and watch the parade float by.
I want to pluck a bouquet of wild flowers
and create a necklace out of violets.
I want to play all day with that inner child
until we hear mothers calling kids to dinner.

Then I'll take her home, put her to bed, and
eagerly await the next sunny day.

WISHING ROCK

I kiss a wish onto
this rock--
a skipping rock--
round and flat and light.
It skims across this pond.
Jumps once, then twice,
and two times quicker.
Then
 down,
 down
slowly drifting to
its grave.
Waiting to be revived.
Longing to be held again
by human hands.
Keeping my wish
beneath calm waters
for someone else
to find.

THE BUSINESSMAN

In a printing shop
on Market Street
where an occasional bum
stumbles in from the elements,
entered one with a brown
paper bag
filled
with treasures
he discovered in some
dumpster
or alleyway
that he huddled closely
to his body
as if to protect it
like a small child.

He quickly opened
his sack and
meticulously
chose a piece
of wadded trash;
then gently smoothed
the document
and had five copies made;
plain white paper
would do nicely.

He inspected
the new sheets
carefully,
dug deep down
into his pocket,
paid the clerk,
and,
making sure
not to wrinkle
his reproductions,
the man
happily
walked out.

KEEPER OF YOUR HEART

Daisies, roses, and pink carnations;
cherubs, a puppy, and an amethyst ring
wrapped within a crystal balloon--
your love--
slowly suffocating
waiting to burst out of this prison
of which I am the keeper.

Take the key--
please,
go.
Your bail has been posted,
your time has been served,
and I'm tired of playing Warden.

CUP OF COFFEE

I am forever
dropping
cubes of sugar
into my coffee,
waiting
for my cup
to runneth
over.

But the lumps
just dissolve,
and all
I get
is a bitter-
sweet cup
of brew.

SECRET

As I rest upon this stump
and watch the river bubble past,
I cannot help but wonder:
what happened to this tree?
I attempt to count its rings
and only get to twelve--
markings from a chain saw
limit me from counting higher.

I wonder if the geese know
why it was cut down.
Or maybe I should inquire of the grass.
I'm sure the oak and maple know,
but they will not say a word--
they are in mourning now.

The crows are cawing me an answer,
but I do not speak their tongue.
And so
the secret remains.

what do You mean

what do You mean,
mr cummings,
with your
queer balloonMan
,your onetwothreefourfive
misplaced commas, and your odd spacings
while
"he sang his didn't he danced his did"
with eddieandbill
and bettyandisbel whose
"eyes are at kisses playing?"

are you Buffalo Bill?
or are you
the yellowsonofabitch
in the mud-
luscious dungeon
of the pretty how town
forgetting to remember
summer autumn winter spring?

life...

continually unnerving series
of events disrupting
silence
never achieved.

love...

fleets of cargo ships,
infinitely abundant,
harbored within souls
seeking depletion
and restoration.

liberty...

the prize in a box of
Cracker Jacks
selectively chosen
for those who
actively pursue it.

THE BLIZZARD OF '93

Stuck in Alabama
in 20 inches of snow;
Don't know what to do--
got no place to go.

Stranded on I-65
can't go forward or back;
Glad we're in no hurry--
break out that 12-pack.

Got some hotdog buns and mustard
but nothin' to put in 'em;
Got a pair of jeans, a T-shirt,
and a jacket made of denim.

Got a quarter tank of gas
and just one sleeping bag;
There's 3 other girls here, too
and one is being a hag.

It's dark, it's cold, it's late
and home is so far away;
Can't wait to get back to Muncie--
something I never thought I'd say.

It's an adventure, that's for sure
but the novelty's wearing thin;
The first 5 hours were fun,
but I have to pee again.

I don't want to climb that hill
and hide behind a bush
'cause I'm wearing shorts and sandals,
and the snow's cold on my tush.

I know I've always dreamt
of an extra-long vacation,
but if I had my choice,
it would be a warmer location.

The moral of this little tale
I haven't learned quite yet;
though I'm sure it's not this trip
but that last beer I will regret.

IRONY

Got behind an old man--
an old man
in an old car
driving
very,
very,
slow-
ly.
Held my tongue.

Got behind a young guy--
a young guy
in a red sports car
driving
slow-
ly
and
gawking
at a pretty girl.
Laid on my horn
and cursed.

Wonder why?

NO OFFENSE

Only neo-Nazi, gay, feminist, pro-life
Sunday school teachers can write poetry--
Is that it?

TO MY CRITICS

Go away.
I don't need your
cutting words;
frankly,
they scare me.
I don't want your advice
or your so-called
knowledge;
I just want to write--
freely.
I am intimidated by
your talents;
so much so that I am
ashamed of my own
creations.

Go away.
But just for a while.